

DECISION NOTICE
EAST FORK LOLO CREEK
ALTERNATE SNOWMOBILE ROUTES

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59804
(406) 542-5500

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED PROJECT:

The proposed action is to authorize the Missoula Snowgoers Snowmobile Club, a Montana State Snowmobile Program Grant recipient, to utilize that grant to develop and groom two new sections of trails enabling the re-routing of snowmobilers to new and safer sections of trail.

Junction B trailhead of the East Fork Lolo Creek trail east to Junction C, is heavily used by snowmobiles and logging trucks if timber sales are in the area creating a high potential for accidents. It is the intent of the Missoula Snowgoers to prepare and groom the proposed Alternate Route #1 to reduce the danger to both snowmobilers and truck drivers only during winters when logging operations occur, which results in a dangerous multi-use of the East Fork Lolo Creek Road. The existing trail will remain in use during seasons when logging operations do not occur. The approximately 4 miles of proposed trail expansion will use existing primitive roads in all areas except approximately ½ mile of logging skid trail which will connect two roads. Signing and gate closures at the trailhead and along the trail will notify snowmobilers when use of the Alternate Route #1 is in effect.

Re-route #2, along the East Fork/West Fork/Butte Hookup trail (circle 7 trail on the Project Area Map, Appendix A), is necessary to connect three loops (circle trails 1, 3 and 8 on the Project Area Map). Plum Creek Timber Corporation has reclaimed a section of road previously used for the snowmobile trail because it was a potential source for stream sedimentation and of no further use to the Company. This approximately ½ mile snowmobile trail re-route will use nearby skid roads on Plum Creek Timber and Lolo National Forest Service lands.

The environmental assessment (EA) was tiered to the Montana Snowmobile Grant Program Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS), of which Alternative Three was selected and states: "the continuation of the current program with modifications." These modifications require an environmental review document be prepared by FWP for each grant application, unless projects are classified as categorical exclusions. The EA addressed snowmobile trails authorized and located on lands of the Lolo National Forest, Missoula Ranger District and lands owned by Plum Creek Timber Corporation.

PUBLIC PROCESS AND COMMENT:

The public comment period began February 21, 2001, and ran through March 23, 2001. Legal notices were published in the Missoulian and Helena Independent Record. A total of 54 comments were received. All of them were in support of the proposal to provide safe passage for families on snowmobiles using the area.

Missoula

DECISION:

Based on the analysis in the Environmental Assessment (EA) and the applicable laws, regulations and policies, I have determined that this action will not have a significant effect on the natural or human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared.

In addition, the US Forest Service has completed their Decision to authorize snowmobile grooming and trail maintenance of the forest service roads utilized in the proposed action. The trail grooming on FDR 2182 will only occur if Plum Creek Timber Company needs wheeled vehicle access on the East Fork of Lolo Creek Road, FDR 461. The trail grooming will occur after December 1 of the year through March 30.

It is my decision to implement the proposed action to authorize the Missoula Snowgoers Snowmobile Club, a Montana State Snowmobile Program Grant recipient, to utilize that grant to develop and groom two new sections of trails enabling the re-routing of snowmobilers to new and safer sections of trail.

By notification of this Decision Notice, the draft EA is hereby made the final EA. The final EA with Decision Notice may be viewed at or obtained from Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks at the above address.

Please direct any further requests or questions to Mack Long, Region 2 Supervisor, or Lee Bastian, Region 2 Park Manager.


Mack Long, Regional Supervisor

4/25/01
Date